

## BRANCH SOLDIERS' HOME IN MICHIGAN.

MAY 7, 1884.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. CUTCHEON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

### REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 6929.]

*The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 5050) to authorize the location of a Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in the State of Michigan; also the bill (H. R. 5521) having the same purpose by amending chapter 3, title 59 of the Revised Statutes of the United States, would respectfully report as follows:*

The policy of establishing Homes for honorably discharged and disabled volunteer soldiers is no longer an open question in this country. It was deliberately entered upon at the close of the war, and it has been deliberately perserved in and maintained ever since. Many millions of dollars have been expended in the creation and maintenance of these Homes, and in fact we believe that we may safely say that it is the settled policy of this Republic to care for the support of its disabled and honorably discharged soldiers, when left otherwise without adequate means of support, and especially when they would otherwise become objects of public or private charity.

There are at present four of these Homes, the Central Home, at Dayton, Ohio; the Eastern Home, at Augusta, Me.; the Western Home, at Milwaukee, Wis.; and the Southern Home, at Hampton (near Fortress Monroe), Va. These are all technically and officially known as Branches of the National Home. These Branches, constituting the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, are under the charge and direction of a Board of Managers of nine distinguished officers, together with the President, Chief Justice, and Secretary of War of the United States, who are members *ex officio*.

The Annual Report of this Board of Managers will be found in H. Mis. Doc. 14, transmitted to the House January 9, 1884. The Board of Managers for the past year were as follows:

#### THE NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS.

##### MANAGERS.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES; THE CHIEF JUSTICE; THE SECRETARY OF WAR, *ex officio*.

General WILLIAM B. FRANKLIN, President, Hartford, Conn.  
Col. LEONARD A. HARRIS, First Vice-President, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
General JOHN A. MARTIN, Second Vice-President, Atchison, Kans.  
General MARTIN T. MCMAHON, Secretary, 93 Nassau street, New York City.

Maj. DAVID C. FULTON, Hudson, Wis.  
General GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, Orange, N. J.  
General JOHN M. PALMER, Springfield, Ill.  
General CHARLES W. ROBERTS, Bangor, Me.  
General JAMES S. NEGLEY, Pittsburgh, Pa.

In order to show the constant, rapid, and steady growth of these homes since their foundation in 1867, to the present time, and to draw therefrom an inference as to the prospective increase, the following table is inserted:

*Number of members of the Home present, and present and absent, at the end of each fiscal year; number of deaths during each fiscal year, and percentage of total deaths to total present and absent from the organization to June 30, 1883.*

Years.	Central Branch.			Western Branch.			Eastern Branch.			Southern Branch.			Total present.	Total present and absent.	Total deaths.	Percentage of deaths to total present and absent.
	Present.	Present and absent.	Deaths.	Present.	Present and absent.	Deaths.	Present.	Present and absent.	Deaths.	Present.	Present and absent.	Deaths.				
1867.....	361	403	..	27	91	119	11	77	97	4	..	..	361	403	.....	..
1868.....	614	751	..	42	135	191	13	378	580	13	..	..	782	967	42	4.34
1869.....	834	1,161	42	135	191	13	378	580	13	..	..	..	1,347	1,932	68	3.52
1870.....	879	1,308	72	367	500	24	424	529	15	..	..	..	1,670	2,337	111	4.75
1871.....	1,079	1,598	70	445	575	39	414	594	17	160	173	12	2,088	2,940	138	4.69
1872.....	1,185	1,631	104	383	541	37	402	568	19	265	313	16	2,235	3,053	176	5.76
1873.....	1,443	1,874	108	336	513	42	445	696	20	294	361	17	2,518	3,444	187	5.43
1874.....	1,782	2,374	130	422	608	39	511	790	22	406	503	18	3,121	4,275	209	4.89
1875.....	2,022	2,604	150	470	636	39	550	706	28	447	543	24	3,489	4,489	241	5.37
1876.....	2,511	3,075	155	483	677	29	555	827	39	480	629	53	4,029	5,208	276	5.30
1877.....	2,687	3,348	174	128	828	41	611	938	33	532	645	39	4,458	5,750	287	4.98
1878.....	3,010	3,731	200	634	814	46	786	1,053	32	580	738	28	5,011	6,336	306	4.83
1879.....	3,336	4,076	145	651	848	53	822	1,123	36	645	828	29	5,454	6,875	263	3.83
1880.....	3,341	4,311	109	629	823	58	734	1,041	60	625	828	40	5,329	7,003	357	5.10
1881.....	3,354	4,537	261	668	924	56	810	1,100	65	706	906	40	5,538	7,467	422	5.65
1882.....	3,672	4,855	305	664	974	72	876	1,268	58	770	1,050	55	5,982	8,147	490	6.01
1883.....	3,653	4,737	281	737	1,155	66	971	1,405	66	1,003	1,330	72	6,414	8,626	485	5.62
Total.....	..	..	2,423	..	..	665	..	..	527	..	..	443	..	..	4,058	...

From this table it will be seen that the number of beneficiaries of the Home has increased with a very constant ratio, from 403, in 1867, to 8,626 in 1883. The recent increase will be shown by the following figures for the last four years:

Total inmates, 1880 .....	7,003	
Total inmates, 1881 .....	7,467	Increase.. 464
Total inmates, 1882 .....	8,147	Increase.. 680
Total inmates, 1883 .....	8,626	Increase.. 479

And this in spite of the large number of deaths shown.

We are assured that the increase during the past winter has been greater than ever before, and has strained all the branches to their utmost capacity.

During the recent inspection, by members of this committee, of the Southern Branch, at the invitation of the Board of Managers, we found that that Branch had been crowded beyond all reason or convenience. Three additional temporary dormitories had to be erected, the summer-house inclosed and converted into a dormitory, and an unfinished attic over the hospital, although unfit for such use, had been utilized. In short, this Branch has been forced to accommodate at least 250 more than its proper and normal capacity. General Franklin, the president of the managers, assured members of your committee that during the last winter the Central Branch at Dayton was crowded at least 500 beyond its normal capacity, and the other Homes or Branches are full.

To assist in arriving at the probable demands upon the Homes for years to come, we append the official statistics as to admissions, discharges, deaths, ages, &c., of inmates during the last fiscal year, as follows:

*Annual report for the four Branches, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, for year ending June 30, 1883.*

Gain:	
Admitted .....	2, 252
Readmitted .....	651
Transferred .....	334
Total .....	3, 237
Loss:	
Honorably discharged .....	729
Dishonorably discharged .....	70
Transferred .....	362
Deserted .....	1, 121
Died .....	485
Total .....	2, 767
Total present .....	6, 437
Total present last report .....	5, 966
Total present and absent .....	8, 626
Total present and absent last report .....	8, 156
Whole number cared for during year .....	14, 704
Whole number cared for during previous year .....	10, 056
Average number present during year .....	6, 792
Average number present and absent during year .....	8, 435
What war:	
War 1861 .....	11, 070
Mexican war .....	311
War 1812 .....	17
What service:	
Volunteers .....	10, 936
Regulars .....	382
Navy .....	80
Age:	
30 to 40 .....	1, 711
40 to 50 .....	3, 382
50 to 60 .....	3, 447
60 to 80 .....	2, 729
80 to 100 .....	129
Married, with wives and minor children .....	3, 315
Disability:	
Loss of limbs .....	557
Wounds .....	4, 405
Sickness .....	5, 772
Blindness .....	512
Other causes .....	152

It will be seen from the foregoing that the number of admissions last year was 2,252 and the readmissions 651, total 2,903; discharged, 799; died, 485; deserted, 1,121; total, 2,405; net gain, 498.

The matter of age is also an important item. It will be noticed that only 1,711 are under forty years of age, while 6,305 of them are upwards of fifty years old, and the average will approach closely toward fifty-five years of age. As age comes upon the veterans, many, who have heretofore been self-supporting, must give up the battle for a living, though they have fought for it long and well. Judging from the experience of the past winter, we may safely conclude that during the coming fiscal year there will be a demand for accommodations for not less than 1,000 additional inmates.

It is the unanimous opinion of the members of the Board of Managers with whom your committee have conferred that the number of beneficiaries must constantly increase for ten years to come, and perhaps for fifteen years.

There can be but little doubt, judging from experience and the present outlook, that when the maximum is reached the number will reach nearly, if not quite, double the present accommodations. That provision should be made seasonably to meet this demand admits of no doubt nor room for discussion.

It does not answer this demand to say that the present system has its drawbacks; that may be admitted. It may be said that it would be better if these men could be provided for in their families. Let it be granted. But it will be noted that out of the whole number of the entire 14,704 cared for during last year there were but 3,315 who had wives or minor children.

With the great majority—nearly three-fourths of them—it is a question between the Soldiers' Home and the poor-house. Can any intelligent and right-minded man hesitate which it shall be? The past and the future, patriotism and humanity, alike and equally cry out against leaving these men in almshouses. It was not so that we promised them. It is not so that this nation owes it to itself, its history, and its future, to provide for the men who fought its battles and preserved its integrity?

In the emphatic words of General Franklin to your committee, "*We must have more Homes.*"

The only question is, Where shall they be located?

The answer to that question is: They ought to be located in those States and among those communities which sent these men to the front, and where, so far as they *have* families, their families reside.

Several members of the committee were present with the managers during their interview with the inmates of the Hampton Home, and noted with interest the universal desire of those that had families to be transferred to the Branch nearest their families, even though it took them from the sunny and genial South to the comparatively inclement North.

We believe that in establishing these additional Homes, it will be wise policy to bring the Home to the old soldiers, and not remove the old soldiers so far from all familiar scenes and associations that they cannot occasionally see their old friends and neighbors and the old comrades who fought side by side with them. In giving them a Home they ought not to be expatriated or removed from their own States or sections when it can be avoided. This policy has been already wisely recognized in providing for a Home beyond the Mississippi, in a bill already reported from this committee.

The bills now under consideration provide for the establishment of a Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in State of Michigan.

The State of Michigan sent to the field during the war, from 1861 to 1865, about 93,000 men. Her population was then but 749,113, as shown by the census of 1860. In 1880 it had reached 1,636,937, and at the present time is estimated at very nearly 2,000,000. Of the population of the State at the outbreak of the war rather more than 10 per cent. were enrolled in the military service. It is believed that very nearly that ratio of the present population is made up of old soldiers. By reference to the last annual report of the National Homes, we find that at

the end of the last fiscal year there were in the several Branches soldiers who enlisted from Michigan, as follows:

Central Branch.....	203
Western Branch.....	81
Southern Branch.....	25
Total.....	312

At the last annual encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Michigan, held at Detroit, Mich., January 23 and 24, 1884, the following report was made and unanimously adopted:

The Committee on the subject of a Soldier's and Sailors' Home in Michigan, made the following report:

Your committee, to whom was referred the matter of suggesting what legislation should be had relative to the establishment of a Home for Disabled Union Soldiers and Sailors, at some point in the State of Michigan, would respectfully report that they have carefully considered the same, and they submit the following as in their opinion the most feasible and speedy plan of securing the desired result:

Whereas evidence has been furnished this encampment by our comrade, Wm. Shakspeare, quartermaster-general of the State, that a large number of worthy and deserving soldiers are pauper inmates of our county poor-houses; and

Whereas it is also learned with regret that the four Branches of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers are inadequate to supply the want they were designed to meet, and that large numbers of deserving soldiers and sailors are dependent upon others, or left to want: Therefore,

*Resolved*, By the department of Michigan G. A. R., in annual encampment assembled, that a committee be appointed by the department commander to draft a bill providing for the erection and permanent establishment of a Michigan Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and Sailors.

*Resolved*, That such bill, when so drafted, be presented to our members of Congress, and that the department commander and the committee unite in an urgent request in behalf of this department, that they use every honorable effort to secure its passage the present session of Congress.

The report of the committee was unanimously adopted, and the following comrades were appointed to constitute the committee: R. F. Hill, of Post No. 79; Geo. P. Sanford, of No. 42; and L. S. Trowbridge, of No. 17.

This department of Michigan represented at that time 221 active posts, and an actual active membership of upwards of 10,000 veteran soldiers.

In addition to the foregoing, the following memorial of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Reunion Association of Southwestern Michigan, representing, as is claimed, 20,000 veteran soldiers, has been submitted to the committee:

#### HEADQUARTERS SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' REUNION

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN,

*Buchanan, Mich., February 29, 1884.*

In accordance with the resolutions adopted at the annual meeting of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Reunion Association of Southwestern Michigan, held at Saint Joseph, Mich., on the 23d day of August, A. D. 1883, we, the undersigned members of the executive committee of said association, respectfully recommend and urge the passage of the following bill for the establishment of a Michigan Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers:

AN ACT to amend chapter 3 of Title LIX of the Revised Statutes of the United States, entitled "National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers," by adding thereto sections 4838, 4839, and 4840.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That chapter 3 of Title LIX of the Revised Statutes of the United States be, and the same is hereby, amended by adding thereto three new sections, to stand as sections 4838, 4839, and 4840, as follows:

SEC. 4838. Said Board of Managers are hereby authorized, empowered, and directed to locate, establish, construct, and permanently maintain a Michigan Branch of said "National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers," to be by said Board located at such place in the State of Michigan as to said Board shall appear most desirable and advantageous, to be known and designated as the "Michigan Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers," and to consist of a tract of land of not less



than 400 acres, and suitable accommodations for at least 4,000 disabled soldiers, and that the sum of \$1,000,000 is hereby appropriated out of the United States Treasury, to be paid to said Board, and by them expended for the purchase of the necessary land and the erection of suitable buildings thereon for said Michigan Branch of said National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

SEC. 4839. That all honorably discharged soldiers and sailors who served in the volunteer forces of the United States in the war of the rebellion, and who are disabled by disease, wounds, or otherwise, and who have no adequate means of support, and by reason of such disability are incapable of earning their living, and who would be otherwise dependent upon public or private charity, shall be entitled to be admitted into said Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, subject to like regulations as they are now admitted to existing National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

SEC. 4840. That within nine months from the approval of this act the said Board of Managers shall commence the erection of suitable buildings on the ground so purchased or procured for the use of said Home. Said buildings shall be completed and ready for occupancy at as early a day as practicable.

L. J. ALLEN,  
R. F. HILL,  
Z. ALDRICH,  
C. E. DEXTER,  
R. L. WARREN,  
*Executive Committee.*

Approved by—

SAMUEL WELLS,  
*President of Soldiers' and Sailors' Reunion Association of Southwestern Michigan.*  
DAVID BACON,  
*Secretary of Soldiers' and Sailors' Reunion Association of Southwestern Michigan.*

In addition to this there have been received and filed with the committee about fifty separate petitions from as many different towns and cities of the State of Michigan, praying for the establishment of a Branch of the National Soldiers' Home in that State. It is claimed that about 200 old veterans of the war are now supported in poor-houses and hospitals by public charity in the State. These are men whose bodies were shattered and whose health was wrecked in the defense of the Republic. They are proper subjects for support in a Home for Disabled Soldiers like those at Dayton and Hampton.

With those now supported in the Homes from Michigan (312), it is evident that there is a present demand for the accommodation of about 500 inmates of such an institution in the State of Michigan. This number in the next ten years we may expect to see reach a maximum of nearly, if not quite, double that number.

If such a Branch were located at some point in Southwestern Michigan it would be contiguous to the northern portion of Indiana and Illinois, and in very complete railroad communication with them. The climate in that latitude is milder than that of Milwaukee or Augusta, and about the same as that of Erie, and but slightly different from that of Dayton. Beautiful and healthful locations can be found in abundance along the line of either the Michigan Central or Southern Railroads, or farther north, where such a Home can be conducted as cheaply as at any point in the United States. The Branch would be under the management of the Board of Managers of the National Home. The location would be left to their discretion. The amount of land to be acquired, and the manner of its acquisition, should be left to their judgment, as well as the extent of accommodations to be provided. The size and plan of buildings should also be left to them, to be added to from time to time as occasion might require.

In conclusion, we must have more Homes. We do not consider such great aggregations as that at Dayton desirable. Discipline is more difficult of enforcement. The moral influence is not so salutary. Transportation is greatly increased; the soldiers are more widely separated

from their families or associates. Smaller Homes, more scattered, bringing the old soldiers nearer to their home influences and old comrades, we believe to be the truer and wiser policy.

Again, when these institutions cease to be needed for their present use, it might be difficult to find appropriate use for such a vast concern as that at Dayton, while there would be no such difficulty in regard to the smaller institutions.

We therefore recommend that House bills 5050 and 5521 be reported back, with a substitute for both in accordance with the views herein expressed ; that the sum to be appropriated be limited to the same amount recommended for the Home west of the Mississippi River, to wit, \$250,000 ; and that the quantity of land to be acquired and the number of inmates to be accommodated be left to the judgment and discretion of the said Board of Managers, the same as at other Branches, and that said bills 5050 and 5521 do lie on the table, and that said substitute do pass.

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